

KNOWING HOW TO LEAD

LESSON 1: POWER BASES AND INFLUENCE



<i>coercive power</i>	<i>referent power</i>
<i>defensive</i>	<i>relinquishing</i>
<i>developmental</i>	<i>reward power</i>
<i>expert power</i>	
<i>legitimate power</i>	

The two concepts of leadership and power are closely intertwined yet have important differences. Leadership focuses on the attainment of a goal. Power does not need to have a goal, just dependence. Leadership most often refers to a downward influence and power does not. Power is focused on gaining compliance.

SOURCE OF POWER

A leader can experience confusion and frustration when trying to gauge how and when to exert power. Leaders used to draw their power from the fact that they were the “boss.” The followers were dependent on the leader for distribution of rewards and punishments. However, it has been learned that leading from the position of boss with these controls can yield average performance. In order to energize followers, leaders must grasp a broader understanding of and relationship to power. Here are five power bases from which power is yielded: coercive, reward, legitimate, expert and referent.

Coercive Power is defined as a power that is yielded by fear — fear that negative results might occur if one does not comply. Fear is generated from the belief that someone might inflict pain, restrict movement or withhold basic needs.

Reward Power is seen when people comply with the wishes of another because they may be given something of value in return — that there is a positive benefit for doing so.

Legitimate Power is given to the person in the position within the hierarchy. Positions of authority can use both coercive and reward power. Most often, because of the

PURPOSE

Leaders can often experience tremendous confusion as they exercise power and influence. If they provide too little influence their followers will drift aimlessly. If they exert too much power the follower will shut down. In this lesson you will learn about the bases of power available to leaders and how to use them effectively. You will also learn about four different approaches to influencing.

INTRODUCTION

Power is the capacity to which you can influence someone else to behave in accordance with what or how you want them to. The amount of power you have is contingent on the level of dependency that person has on you. The greater the dependency, the greater the power. You only have power if you have something that the other person wants. As a high school student living at home, you are highly dependent on your parents for financial support. Once you graduate and get a job, the level of dependence significantly decreases.

position they hold, when they speak, the followers listen and comply.

Expert Power comes from the result of specific expertise, knowledge or special skills. They are seen as the expert in the field (i.e., technology, medicine, politics and religion) and their advice is sought after and followed.

Referent Power is based on admiration. This power is used often in the advertising world. Tiger Woods is admired by the world and can influence what people buy through his endorsement of the product. The product is purchased in hopes to be seen more like him.

IDENTIFY THE POWER BEING USED

1. The person yells at others and you want to avoid making him angry. [coercive]
2. The person gives rewards to people and you want to trade favors with him. [reward]
3. The person is the supervisor and you are the subordinate and she has the right to ask for compliance. [legitimate]
4. The person has the knowledge and experience in the task at hand and you defer to her judgment. [expert]
5. You really like this person and search for opportunities to do things for him. [referent]

UNDERSTANDING INFLUENCE

Influence can be thought of as power in action. It is difficult to know how much influence to exert with followers and in teams. The challenge is to know when and

how to exercise more or less influence on the follower or the team. Four types of influence available to the leader are: controlling, relinquishing, developing, and defensive.

Controlling is a one-way approach. It involves exerting pressure, using authority or attempting to persuade someone into doing something the way you feel it should be done.

It is best to use this approach when you have all or most of the facts, experience, or knowledge related to the problem at hand, there is an emergency situation or speed is important, the resistance to a course of action is low, and/or the need to develop collective commitment and understanding is low.

Relinquishing is also a one-way approach and it involves giving up influence and reducing one's contribution or role in the situation. The leader may accommodate or comply with the wishes of others. This one-way approach puts others in the influencing position.

It is best to use this approach when the team has most of the facts and experience related to the problem, the problem is highly personal and not work-related, and/or the team is highly motivated and can learn from the experience.

The **Developmental** approach is a two-way or mutual approach. It involves sharing opinions or facts. This approach is used most often when there is a need for consensus.

This approach is best used when the individuals involved do not have all the experience and knowledge about the situation, collective commitment is important, there is resistance or a difference of opinion, and/or new ideas are needed.

The **Defensive** approach occurs when the person withdraws from the situation. This withdrawal can be seen visible by someone leaving the room, or invisibly, by tuning people out. The person in this behavior cannot be influenced or influence others.

This approach is best used when there is insufficient information to explore the issue any further, and/or there is a legal, moral, or ethical consideration that prevents discussion of the issue.

These approaches can be either a positive approach to influencing others or a dysfunctional approach if used incorrectly. With each there can be warnings.

Controlling: Even if you have all the facts, unless others recognize your expertise (expert power), they will resist this approach. There are a few situations where any one person has all the facts or knowledge related to the problem. No one of us is as smart as all of us. And finally, this method is less effective when there are expectations of employee involvement.

Relinquishing: Be careful that you are not using this approach to avoid “rocking the boat.” Sometimes discussions are hard and people are not always happy. Don’t use this approach to avoid dealing with the issue. If you have been controlling and feel the need for change, don’t run all the way to this point to compensate from previous behavior.

Developmental: Just a word of caution here. This approach takes more time and energy on the part of everyone. Some may feel this is a rather soft approach and may be uncomfortable with it. It is important that you have strong communication and listening skills.

Defensive: Patience is important here. Don’t continue to push and if withdrawal

occurs, be willing to come back at another time to better understanding of the situation.

Different situations require your selecting the appropriate approach to use and used appropriately each approach can be effective. Effective two-way communications and a win/win attitude about conflict are key ingredients to the developmental approach and most often the benefits of the developmental approach outweigh the others. When in the developmental approach process there is a great amount of give-and-take of information, ideas, and opinions between the leader and the follower or the team. If disagreement exists, instead of saying you don’t agree, explore the reasons behind the idea. You could ask “Why do you think that is important? What would happen if we did that? The assumption that one person is right or wrong is set aside and all ideas are considered. There is a desire to hear what is being said. Clearly this is not the type of influence we are familiar with. We are used to the controlling (being told what to do) or the relinquishing (withdrawing from the discussion). We are also used to how those two approaches feel to us and once we experience the developmental approach, as either the leader or the follower, we will want to lead or follow that path again.

As a leader in an organization you will often feel caught between the needs of your organization and the needs of your team for they are not always the same. At the beginning of this lesson we defined power as “the capacity to influence people” and we learned about where power comes from and different approaches to influencing others. Let’s broaden this definition and its application. An expanded definition of power can be “the capacity to influence the larger system to survive and adapt.” It is important that you know how to use the power and influence you have in your organizational role as well as the role of team/unit leader. You will have infor-

mation from different parts of the organization and can see the total picture more clearly than either the team or the organization. It is your responsibility to facilitate integration of both viewpoints.

Leaders can serve an integrating function by moving back and forth between working with their teams and working with other team leaders in the organization. When you are with your team you are working independently from other team leaders. You will use your influencing skills within your team. You will focus on what is working, what the team needs, and what difficulties the team is experiencing. However, when you are meeting with other team leaders there is a sharing of what they have heard while working with their own teams.

The potential knowledge pool for team leaders is substantial. Team leaders create a forum for sharing information with each other and effecting the organization as a whole. Often this is known as gaining “critical mass.”

CONCLUSION

In this lesson you learned about the bases of power available to leaders and how to use them effectively. You also learned about four different approaches to influencing people.

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